

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 AID-20 COME-00 EB-11 FRB-02 TRSE-00 XMB-07

OPIC-12 CIEP-02 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01 FEA-02 SCI-06

DRC-01 IGA-02 DOTE-00 /169 W
----- 010598

R 171515Z JAN 74

FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5051

INFO AMEMBASSY LUSAKA

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY MBABANE

AMEMBASSY MASERU

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 0083

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ENRG, EAID, BC

SUBJ: ENERGY: BOTSWANA FUEL CRISIS

REF: A) GABORONE 1755 (NOTAL), B) GABORONE 1806 (NOTAL)

MBABANE FOR OSARAC

1. REVIEWED FUEL SITUATION WITH PRESIDENT AND CONCERNED STAFF
OF HIS OFFICE UPON MY RETURN FROM CONSULTATION. MAIN POINTS
OUR CONVERSATIONS ARE AS FOLLOWS:

A. SAUDI ARABIA HAS PROMISED BOTSWANA 200,000 TONS
OF CRUDE WHICH APPROACHES ONE YEAR'S SUPPLY. WHILE PRICE
AT WHICH CRUDE IS OFFERED HAD NOT BEEN DETERMINED PRIMARY
PROBLEM IS LOCATING FACILITY WHERE THE CRUDE CAN BE REFINED
AND TRANSPORTED TO BOTSWANA ECONOMICALLY. USE OF ZAMBIAN
REFINERY AT NDOLA IS APPARENTLY OUT SINCE LATEST WORD
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FROM RHODESIAN RAILWAY AUTHORITIES IS THAT TECHNICAL

PROBLEMS PROHIBIT USE OF THEIR FACILITY. THERE IS A KNOWN SHORTAGE OF TANK CARS, COOPERATION BETWEEN ZAMBIAN AND RHODESIAN OFFICIALS IS DOUBTFUL AT BEST AND RHODESIANS EVIDENCE NO DESIRE TO BE HELPFUL TO BOTSWANA IN TERMS COPING WITH FUEL SITUATION. DUE TO LATTER ATTITUDE GOB HAS NOT APPROCHED RAILWAY OFFICIALS-THEY DO NOT DEAL DIRECTLY WITH GOVERNMENT PERSONNEL PER SE - REGARDING ACCESS THROUGH THODESIA BY ROAD. USE OF THE NORTH-SOUTH EXISTING ROAD TRACK IS RULED OUT SINCE VITUALLY IMPASSABLE AT THIS OR ANY OTHER TIME OF THE YEAR.

B. BOTSWANA GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS WILL TRY TO GAIN ACCEPTANCE OF SAUDIS TO PERMIT REFINING IN SOUTH AFRICA FOR ONWARD SHIPMENT TO BOTSWANA. THEY ARE EXTREMELY DOUBTFUL AS ARE WE THAT SUCH A PROPOSAL WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE SINCE WOULD BE VIEWED BY OTHERS AS VIOLATION OF THE OIL EMBARGO AND OBVIOUS OPPORTUNITY FOR DIVERSION.

C. THE GOB HAS EXPLORED POSSIBLE AIRLIFT FROM NDOLA TO FRANCISTOWN USING ALASKA INTERNATIONAL AIR BUT HAS RULED THIS OUT AS UNECONOMIC SINCE COST IS PROHIBITIVE. WHILE THEIR FIGURES CAN (GARBLED)NED OFFICIALS ESTIMATE COST TO BOTSWANA TO BE ON ANNUAL BASIS 32 MILLION RAND.

D. SOUTH AFRICA HAS REDUCED BOTSWANA'S SUPPLY OF FUELS BY 30 PER CENT.

E. BOTSWANA IS BEGINNING TO EXPERINCE DIFFICULTY IN SECURING STORAGE SPACE FOR IT FROZEN BEEF AS WELL AS SHPPING SPACE ON SHIPS FROM SOUTH AFRICAN PORTS. IN PART THIS IS DUE TO EARLY SHIPMENTS OF SOUTH AFRICAN FRUIT BUT PRIMARILY TO SA AUTHORITIES APPARENTLY LIMINTING BUKERING TO SHIPS CARRYING SA RELATED CARGO.

F. PRESIDEN ALTHOUGH EXTREMELY TIRED LEAVES FOR ZAMBIA TODAY FOR CONVERSATIONS WITH PRESIDENT KAUNDA RETURNING BOTSWANA LATER THIS WEEK. KHAMA WAS ALSO TO LEAVE FOR NIGERIA JANUARY 21 BUTSTRIP NOW POSTPONED AT REQUEST F.R.N, DUE UNAVAILABILITY GENERAL GOWON.
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G. VICE PRESIDENT WITH GROUP DEPARTS BOTSWANA JANUARY 21. VP WILL VISIT AFRICAN AND MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES AND THEN SWING THROUGH EUROPE ENDING UP WITH VISITS TO CANADA AND WASHINGTON FOR TALKS WITH IBRD AND AID. TRIP PROMARILY SECURE ASSISTANCE FOR UPGRADING OF NORTH-SOUTH ROAD, PIN DOWN CRUDE AVAILABILITIES, ETC.

2. BOTSWANA AUTHORITIES ARE SOME WHAT DISCOURAGED AND GLOOMY. WHILE EFFORTS TO EASE FUEL SITUATION HAVE BEEN VIGOROUS AND UNENDING NO VIABLE ALTERNATIVES TO COVER SHORT TERM SITUATION HAVE RESULTED. UNLESS THERE IS A TURN AROUND NO OTHER COURSE THAN CONTINUED DEPENDENCE ON SOUTH AFRICA SEEMS POSSIBLE. THE UNFAVORABLE AND OCCASIONALLY HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH BOTSWANA IS LOCATED AND ITS VULNERABLE, CAPTIVE SITUATION COULD NOT BE MADE MORE CLEAR. THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A REAL ALTERNATIVE, THE NORTH-SOUTH ROAD, ASSUMES TODAY EVEN GREATER IMPORTANCE IN THE MINDS OF THE PRESIDENT AND OTHER OFFICIALS INsofar AS BOTSWANA'S SURVIVAL IS CONCERNED. NELSON

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